



Carol O'Hare, president of the Morgan Hill Friends of the Library

Local Book Lover Leads Library Fundraising Effort

By Marty Cheek July 8, 2006

When it comes to Morgan Hill's new public library now under construction, local resident Carol O'Hare is on a mission.

She's enthusiastically leading the drive to make sure this \$17 million civic project is something the community can truly take pride in.

"I want to make sure the new library isn't just a good library. I want it to be a great library," she keeps telling Morgan Hill residents in promoting her passion.

And making that library leap will take cash – about \$250,000 or so. The money will go to upgrade furniture and provide indoor and outdoor art for the 28,000-square-foot building.

As president of the Friends of the Morgan Hill Library, O'Hare now heads the Beyond Books campaign to raise the cash from the community. The year-long fund-raising effort was kicked off at the May library ground-breaking event, and has so far raised almost \$50,000. O'Hare has faith that with the enthusiasm the Morgan Hill community shows for the new library project, the donations will continue to flow to reach the goal.

Helping with the fundraising are a series of social events the Friends have planned before Morgan Hill's new library opens to the public in summer 2007. The grandest of them will take place next weekend on July 16 when library supporters host a swank garden party event at Mary and Mike Cox's Villa del Lago estate.

The elaborate fundraiser – billed as “An Afternoon in Tuscany” – will be the South Valley social event of the summer, O’Hare promised.

“If you can’t go to Italy this summer, you can enjoy a taste of Tuscany at Villa del Lago,” she said with a laugh. O’Hare described the home as a Mediterranean-style dwelling with an expansive backyard that’s been beautifully landscaped around a pool. It borders on a beautiful lake on the west side of Morgan Hill.

Well-known authors scheduled to be at the event include legal thriller writer Dylan Schaffer, mystery writer Janet LaPierre, Silicon Valley novelist Catherine Burr, olive oil expert Carol Firenze and award-winning storyteller Peter Orner.

“It’s a chance to mingle with Bay Area authors, local dignitaries, and some of the large community of library supports,” O’Hare said. “It’s really a chance to bring people who support the library together.”

The event will be catered by some of the finest South Valley restaurants, she said. And local vineyards, including Guglielmo Winery, will supply plenty of vino for everyone to enjoy.

Guests will also do an olive oil tasting of award winning oil produced Chris Banthien of Valencia Creek Farms.

One of the highlights of the Afternoon in Tuscany event will be the silent auction. As befitting a library fundraiser, various books will be included as auction items including autographed copies from best-selling writers.

Signed copies of Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner* novel will be offered as well as the first three “Harry Potter” children’s books signed by British author J.K. Rowling. Thomas Kinkade has supplied a signed copy of his latest book *Points of Light: A Celebration of the American Spirit of Giving*.

One auction item expected to raise a lot of money for the library is a rare advanced reading copy of Dan Brown’s mega-bestseller *The Da Vinci Code*. Although it’s not autographed, O’Hare believes this book will be worth a considerable amount of money in future years and thus will inspire some South Valley book lover to write a big check for the Beyond Books campaign.

Other items at the silent auction will include bottles of fine wine and also a vacation trip to New York City.

The biggest item for bid at the silent auction is a five-course dinner for eight guests at the Villa del Lago home of Mary and Mike Cox. “You couldn’t imagine more gracious hosts. They’re very warm and welcoming. They consider it a privilege to welcome people to their home. They love to entertain, and they’re big library supporters and supporters of the community,” O’Hare said.

The Beyond Books campaign has other fundraising programs including the opportunity to name certain rooms and locations of the new library in exchange for a donation.

O’Hare’s passion for the new library comes from her love of books, something she’s had since she was a child. As a girl growing up in Minneapolis, Minn., every summer starting in seventh grade, she would re-read the classic novel *Gone with the Wind*, as well as classics by Jane Austin and the Bronte sisters. She recalls that as a young girl, she would frequently go to her hometown library and cart an armload of books back home.

“I believe in the value of libraries for communities,” she said. “It has to do with reading. I love books. And I believe those who can’t afford to buy books should have access to books through the public library.”